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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problems associated with mentoring programs for people of color and women in postsecondary education by providing a theoretical framework for their analysis, by exploring mentoring as a promising tool to help solve them, and by advocating the initiation of mentoring of minorities and women as a policy in school systems and universities. Some of the pitfalls of mentoring that are examined are: (1) the argument that mentoring promotes competition, focuses too much on personal ambition of the individual and promotes elitism and exclusion; (2) the scarcity of senior level, appropriate mentors for minority women; (3) the promotion of the status quo by socializing proteges into the "rules of the game" through "traditional mentoring"; (4) the failure of cross-race/cross-gender mentor-mentee relationships due to personal and organizational barriers; and (5) promotion by "traditional" mentor-mentee relationships of dependency and subordination of minority women, thereby hindering them from assuming the peer/colleague role. Analysis of the pitfalls of mentoring minorities as well as transforming strategies designed to correct these problems, are discussed for each pitfall named. It is suggested that appropriate mentoring is a viable means of retaining people of color and women as active, inside participants in the system. Contains 37 references. (GLR)

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An Analysis of Some Pitfalls of Traditional Mentoring for Minorities and Women in Higher Education

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An Analysis of Some Pitfalls of Traditional Mentoring for Minorities and Women in Higher Education

Theresa E. McCormick

Introduction

Mentoring programs for people of color and women need to become a basic part of university policy in support of education that is multicultural and nonsexist. The United States is a multicultural society with schools of equal diversity. Future schools will become even more diverse given the rapidly increasing proportion of minority students to majority students. By the 21st century over 30 percent of students in public schools will be minority; however, the minority teaching force (about 12.5 percent now) is dwindling. The percentage of Black teachers has dropped from 7.8 percent to 6.9 percent since 1983, and Hispanics and other minorities make up only 3.5 percent of public school teachers (Haberman, 1988, p. 39). Adding to this dismal picture at the university level is the fact that few minorities are entering teacher education programs.

There is also a scarcity of minority and women faculty in higher education. The urgency to increase efforts to hire and retain minorities and women on university campuses has been in the forefront of various media reports on higher education in the last few years (Grund, 1989a,; Monaghan, 1989; Gray, 1988).

While there has been a significant growth since 1960 in the numbers of women of all ethnic groups enrolling in post-secondary education and earning baccalaureate and advanced degrees (OECD, 1986; Grund, 1989b), there has not been a comparable increase in

numbers of women faculty members in universities and colleges. For example, the most recent data indicate that full-time female faculty in higher education institutions held only 27.6 percent of all faculty positions.

Of the total number of full-time faculty positions (470,673) held by men and women in all ranks in 1983, 112,267 (24.5 percent) were held by white women; 8,911 (1.8 percent) by black women; 2,184 (.5 percent) by Hispanic women; 3.187 (.7 percent) by Asian women; and 355 (.07 percent) by Native American women (Digest of Education Statistics, 1988). Although many universities have an identified goal of increasing the number of women and minority faculty members, the data cited indicates the lack of progress toward that goal and the severity of the problem.

This paper addresses the problems sketched above by providing a theoretical framework for their analysis, by exploring mentoring as a promising tool to help solve them, and by advocating the initiation of mentoring of minorities and women as a policy in school systems and universities.

The political and judicial events and decisions at the federal level during the last ten years have fostered a climate that denies the multicultural reality of U.S. society. Provincial, Eurocentric perspectives in universities reflect this denial of diversity. All students need to see themselves reflected in the schools they attend. This reflection should occur not only in the curriculum, but also in the faculty who deliver

the courses. At present, the curriculum and faculty only provide "good" reflections for Anglo students.

Attracting, hiring, and retaining more minority teachers would obviously add much needed diversity to our universities. Also, a more diverse faculty is urgently needed to provide role models for minority students, to counter the resurgence of racism on campuses and to make programs truly reflective of multicultural realities in society.

What Are Some Benefits, Pitfalls and Challenges of Mentoring?

Speaking at a large, predominantly white male university in the Midwest, on July 13, 1988, Jacqueline Flemming, an African-American professor from Barnard College and author of Blacks in College (1984), emphasized the importance of role models and mentors for the success of both minority students and faculty. Appropriate role models for minority and female students can positively affect their actual experiences in school and help overcome the isolation and vulnerability that so many of them face (Winkler, 1988). Having someone to emulate is especially needed by minority female students, since the contributions, values, experiences and perspectives of minority women are practically invisible in the standard curriculum. Minority and women role models serve as "flesh and blood" reminders that minorities and women do make a difference.

What Are the "Best" Concepts of Mentoring Roles?

One of the best concepts of mentoring is that it is a

validation process of "real acceptance into that social collegial network which assists with promotion, advancement, and recognition ..." (Elliott & Holmberg-Wright, 1983, p. 68). Discussing the functions of mentors, Simeone (1987, p. 101) says, "Perhaps most important, the sponsor helps to form within the protege the sense of him or herself as a member of the profession, encouraging and fostering a self-image as a legitimate member of the community of scholars."

Whether for first-year minority or women students or for faculty members, appropriate mentoring can play a decisive role in their retention, career development, and success. Mentoring enhances a newcomer's liklihood of success in the system by providing necessary information (e.g. how to access resources), counseling and guidance, and by developing trust and personal relationships/friendships. A mentor specifically introduces and initiates the mentee into the demands and expectations of school life, shares knowledge, provides encouragement, and serves as a role model. Most importantly, a mentor helps to create within the newcomer a sense of identity as a member of the profession.

Here is a sampler of mentor roles drawn from the literature [Table 1] (Odell, 1990, p. 7).

Since "traditional" mentoring, the avenue for success of white males in academia, has largely excluded minorities and women, varied approaches to mentoring must be developed and provided by schools and universities to give the excluded ones

access to information and to other types of needed assistance that will help them succeed.

What Are Some "Pitfalls" of Mentoring?

There is extensive documentation of numerous pitfalls of mentoring for minorities and women to be wary of. Many of the acknowledged problems of mentoring for minorities and women stem from the fact that it has been the main tool used by "the white male club" to maintain its nearly exclusive position of power in education. Carter (1982, p. 4) says, "While much of the literature stresses the importance of the mentor-protege relationship ..., it must also be noted that success in mentor-protege rela- relationships seems assured only when both partners in the relationships are white males."

My position is that the present model of "traditional" white male mentoring does contain pitfalls for minorities and women, but it can and must be transformed to be equally functional for their academic advancement since the evidence so clearly indicates the necessity of having a mentor for success in education. In order to transform mentoring to a model that is serviceable for minorities and women, the pitfalls must be delineated and solutions developed. Following is a summary of five key pitfalls of "traditional" mentoring that are identified in the literature. Later, an analysis of them is presented in the context of society and education institutions, and finally some implications for educational policy are offered.

Pitfall # 1: "Traditional" mentoring promotes competition and focuses too much on personal ambition of the individual and promotes elitism and exclusion [Table 2] (R. Collins, 1982; Wilkerson, 1984).

Carter (1982, p. 9) notes, because of negative connotations about mentoring, many minority women who have "made it" on their own, " ...deny the existence or the necessity of the mentor-protege relationship as a factor in success. ...these successful minority and women professionals perceive themselves as elites and do not realize that they are on the periphery of the system."

Pitfall # 2: Scarcity of senior level, appropriate mentors for minority women (Table 2).

This is linked with pitfall # 1 [competition] (R. Collins, 1982). Minority women must compete for a mentor from the existing pool of senior faculty who are usually white and/or male and this competition for a limited resource can create conflict by undermining cooperation and solidarity of the group (Hall & Sandler, 1983; R. Collins, 1982). Carter (1982, p. 5) observes, "...the literature documents a glaring reality concerning the lack of successful mentor relationships for young minority persons and women."

Pitfall # 3: "Traditional" mentoring promotes and maintains the status quo by socializing proteges into the "rules of the game" and many of the "rules" one must learn in order to be in the "inner circle" are discriminatory against minority/women faculty

(Table 2).

Roger Collins (1982, p. 7) equates learning and accepting the "rules of the game" with "...colonialist strategies that require the colonized to abdicate their identity, their history, and their commitment to oppressed compatriots in order to recieve colonial favors apparently crucial to their survival." Part of the inherent conflict for a minority woman being mentored into the "inner circle" of academia concerns the inculcation of an intellectual legacy that may be incompatible with her own paradigms of knowledge and the world (R. Collins, 1982).

Pitfall # 4: Cross-race/cross-gender mentor-mentee relationships have not met with success due to personal and organizational barriers [Table 2] (Kram, 1985; Zey, 1984; R. Collins, 1982; N. Collins, 1983).

In studies on mentoring in the corporate world, both Zey (1984) and Kram (1985) mention "comfort-discomfort" factors involved in cross-gender mentoring. These concerns are due in part to the lack of socialization of both sexes to interact with each other as peers in close work relationships. Discussing her work on cross-gender mentoring, Kram (1985, p. 64) says, "Concerns about increasing intimacy and concerns about the public image of the relationship caused both individuals to avoid interaction that had the potential to provide a wide range of career and psychosocial functions; ... Similar patterns are likely to exist in interracial relationships as well." It is important to note

that the research does not negate the value of mentoring (whether cross-gender or cross-race), but rather it indicates, as Carter (1982, p. 8) says, "... that the mentor-protege relationship functions most effectively when the mentor and the protege share common values, attitudes, goals, and perceptions of the world."

Pitfall # 5: "Traditional" mentor-mentee relationships promote dependency and subordination of minority women, and it is difficult for the mentee to move to the position of peer/colleague (Table 2).

This pitfall is linked with the charges that mentoring is paternalistic/maternalistic, colonalist, and elitist (Kram, 1985; N. Collins, 1983; Carter, 1982; Hall & Sandler, 1983; R. Collins, 1982). Nichols and Golden (1982, p. 9) strongly state, "Mentors can inhibit independence and professional autonomy. And the evidence indicates that even more than others, minority persons and women are expected, ... to remain subordinate ... and dependent."

Moving Mentoring Beyond the White Male Club

The prevailing societal and institutional conditions that support the continued low number of minority and women faculty in universities and the low percentage of minority public school teachers may be examined by using an analytic tool developed by Robert Terry (1974, 1986) which focuses on four interdependent aspects of organizations: mission/culture, power, structure and resources (Table 3). In the process of this analysis, the five identified pitfalls of mentoring for minorities and women in

education will be critiqued as symptoms of a larger organizational dysfunction of "the white male club." Hopefully, the critique will help clarify the pitfalls so that a more functional model of mentoring for minorities and women can be implemented.

In workshop settings (1986), as well as in his writing (1974), Robert Terry, consultant on racism, sexism and institutional change, has conceptualized and illustrated his four-point model for analyzing problems in an organization as hierarchical beginning with its mission/culture, then the power considerations, followed by its structure and concluding with resources of the organization (Table 3). The four concepts are interrelated, but mission/culture are considered to be primary since their omnipresence fundamentally affects all other aspects of an organization.

Mission as conceptualized by Terry (1974, 1986) is a concept that describes the direction "toward which" the organization moves. The mission encorporates the meaning, vision, dreams, hopes, apsirations that are implicit in the human endeavors of the organization. Culture is embedded in the mission of the organization. The culture of the group includes the ethos, values and value orientations, beliefs and standards assumed to be shared by group members.

Power in Terry's model embodies the energy "by which" the organization makes and keeps decisions over time and entails

commitment and will. In addition to having access to resources, holders of power can mobilize resources to accomplish their goals.

Structure is the form "through which" the everyday business of the organization is carried out. Structure is provided by institutionalized patterns, practices and policies which define roles and allot rewards and punishments. It is embodied by "rules of the game," regulations and procedures that are patterned over time.

Resources are the "materials" "from which" energy flows to make things happen in an organization. Resources encompass concrete materials as well as time, space, status and of course, wealth and income derived from the organization. Holders of power have access to organizational resources, control their distribution pattern and can use them to achieve their goals.

Analyses and Strategies

To analyze institutional problems, such as the low number of minority women faculty in universities or the pitfalls of mentoring for them, Terry (1974, 1986) believes that one must first determine the nature of the problem. Is it a mission/culture problem, a power, structure or a resources problem? In his consulting experience with varied organizations across the United States, he says generally when people agree on the nature of a problem (e.g., power), it actually is the one above it in the heirarchy (i.e., mission) and they tend to try to solve the

problem at the level below (i.e., structure). Another issue that he has identified is that some groups stay at the lower levels of analysis (structure and resources) in their effort to bring about change and never deal with power and mission issues in the organization.

The cultural standards of "the white male club" engender a misplacement of the problem, and to avoid changing, the club blames the victim for its problems (Terry, 1974). He also observes, "To examine racism and sexism one must look beyond facts and statistics, ... Racism and sexism in America are not problems simply to be listed alongside other problems. They are part of the club's foundation" (p. 18).

Analysis of Pitfall # 1

"The white male club" in highly technical, Western cultures values and "rewards individual initiative, encourages competition, supports dispassionate, objective, and analytic thinking, ... " according to Terry (1974, p. 18). Competitive value orientations permeate the large research universities in the United States; however, many minority women place more value on communal sharsharing, collaboration and openness and find cut-throat competitiveness to be debilitating and dysfunctional in their careers.

Pitfall # 1 is analyzed as being a problem related to the university's culture with its white male values, value orientations, beliefs and standards that are erroneously assumed to be

shared by all who are in the institution.

Transforming strategies to correct pitfall # 1 include the following ideas which address the prime level of Terry's analytic tool, i.e., mission and culture. The culture and mission of white male-dominated universities need to be humanized and redirected, not totally eradicated. Terry (1974, p. 18) says, "Bringing together the strengths of both sets of values [male/female, minority/majority]--a process of cultural synergism--is absolutely essential if any alternative to the club is to emerge."

Since the present cultural values of universities, based on an "either/or," exclusionary mind-set, feed competition and conflict, a "both/and" approach must be worked toward in order to make mentoring functional for minority and women faculty. If the mission of education is to have meaning for all its constituents, leaders must redirect its course toward community and connectedness. As Terry (1986) explains, persons in communities exist; "we are, therefore, I am."

Another orientation for redirecting the negative effect of "traditional" mentoring for minorities and women is found in Gehrke's (1988) exposition of Martin Buber's I-Thou and I-It philosophy of primal relationships. The typical mode in use is the I-It relationship which is manipulative and pragmatic, whereas, the I-Thou relationship abandons objectifying and manipulating the other for an authentic confirmation of each one's existence. She says, "... if we wish to encourage

mentoring roles among a variety of helping roles, we should attend to the context and conditions for achieving more of an I-Thou relationship" (p. 44).

Still another approach to reducing the competition of mentoring is revealed in Wilkerson's (1984) conception, "Lifting as We Climb." This idea of helping others as one advances is rooted in African-American's struggles for freedom from slavery. Wilkerson (1984, p. 61) says, "It ["Lifting as We Climb"] is still pertinent to women of color ... for it acknowledges their need and desire for personal advancement while connecting them with a collective effort to improve the quality of life for many."

Analysis of Pitfall # 2

Conflict arises because of scarcity of a desired resource (appropriate senior level mentors) for minority women faculty. As we have observed in Terry's analytic model, holders of power can martial resources to achieve their goals, and white males control a disproportionate share of resources. Roger Collins (1982) pinpoints the problem by saying,

> For women and minority persons, the scarcest and most valuable resource is often the availability of a mentor within a particular organization. ... it is likely that mentors select proteges on the basis of their semilarities. ...this tendency diminishes opportunities for selection for those members of groups that have been traditionally excluded from the organization.(p.4)

Pitfall # 2 is analyzed initially as a resource problem, as inferred from the previous discussion. Unequal distribution of resources also indicates that power and structure problems exist. Since this pitfall is so closely tied to pitfall # 1 (competition), a mission/culture problem is indicated also.

Transforming strategies to address the resource, mission/culture, power and structure problems embedded in pitfall # 2 include augmenting a formal mentoring program with informal systems such as networking, peer pals, "sister" systems, paper mentors (for example, written materials on "learning the ropes" of the tenure and promotion process) to provide adequate resources for the mentoring needs of minority women faculty.

Likewise, it is suggested that structural rewards, such as faculty released time, merit raises, credit toward tenure and promotion, or at least, public recognition be built into the system for mentors. Since the few minority faculty women who do hold senior positions are usually "stretched thin" serving as the "token minority" on numerous committees, they especially need to be awarded released time for mentoring junior faculty.

Analysis of Pitfall # 3

Pressure to conform to the "rules of the game" and to role expectations is as powerful in white male-dominated universities as in any other institution. Adherence to "rules of the game" is a price to be paid by the mentee in "traditional" mentoring relationships. Roger Collins (1982, p. 6) says, "...to the extent

that certain of these rules have served to undermine the status of women and minority faculty, they are likely to reject them."

Pitfall # 3 is analyzed primarily as a structure problem, since it is the rules, regulations and policies defining the structure of universities that are problematic in the context of this pitfall. Indications of a mission/culture problem are also implied because of the ways in which "the club" deals with dissenters [by pacification or elimination] (Terry, 1974).

Transforming strategies to help alleviate the structure and mission/culture problems related to pitfall # 3 address the need to overcome the rejection of having a single "traditional" mentor by minority women who feel that they will be "colonized" or that they will sacrifice their personal integrity. Two options that Carter (1982, p. 11) mentions are initiating multiple mentor relationships with different senior faculty and establishing symbolic mentorships wherein the junior faculty "have the opportunity to observe academia function without locking themselves into a relationship which they deem condescending or colonizing."

Structural problems associated with pitfall # 3 also can be addressed by examining the school policy concerning allotment of "rewards and punishments" associated with institutional practice. Flemming (1988) says that providing a mentoring program is a structural issue since time given to a junior faculty member detracts from the senior faculty member's research time.

Therefore, she advocates that mentoring be legitimized as a part of the reward system for faculty. When a reward system is built into institutional policy, then accountability must be addressed by conducting a systematic assessment of mentors and the success rate of their mentees.

Another policy that would assure appropriate mentoring for minority and women faculty becomes a reality in the structure of the school is to make the track record of hiring and retaining minority and women faculty a component in the evaluation of college deans, department chairs, and school administrators. Restructuring of rules, procedures for job searches and other practices can be hastened by meshing school-wide mentoring efforts and accountability measures with the affirmative action program and administrative efforts.

Analysis of Pitfall # 4

A high rate of success in mentoring relationships occurs when both mentor and mentee are white males, while the failure rate is higher with women and minorities. Typically, "The club" blames the victim for not meeting the required standards.

Pitfall # 4 is analyzed as a mission/culture problem since the lack of success of "traditional" mentoring for minority females has been attributed to the fact that the culture embedded in the mission of white male-dominated universities takes care of its own and only passively includes those who are "different." Also, there are structural and power problems associated with

this pitfall because of the institutional practices that have evolved from the values of "the club."

A transforming strategy related to solving the culture difference problem is to start with same sex/same race mentors/ mentees if possible (Hall and Sandler, 1983). Then later, the initial mentor helps the mentee find another mentor with a different background and different strengths. It is recommended that mentees seek both types of mentors--those of their own race and sex and those who command the power in the area that they are trying to enter.

To increase the "comfort" level of interaction between cross-sex/cross-race mentoring relationships, institutions must develop more sex- and race-neutral activities and sites where social contact occurs naturally and comfortably. Many corporations are developing a more familial environment by organizing special interest clubs (exercise, computers) where all people can mix, in contrast to exclusive male clubs of the past (Zey, 1984).

Structural problems related to pitfall # 4 may be addressed by attending to an idea provided by Kram (1985). She indicates that the reward system must be changed from one that values only bottom-line results to one that values how well senior members help develop their juniors. She also suggests evaluating the task design of the workplace. If it is found to be isolating and competitive then change the design of work tasks to encourage relationship building and interaction between people.

Analysis of Pitfall # 5

Egalitarian principles do not prevail over the process of gaining access to advancement in education. Access to professional authority and success in academia is problematic for minority women because of the difficulty of progressing from the dependency of mentee status to the level of full colleague. In Passages, Gail Sheehy (1974) observes that mentees must let go of the mentor in order to grow to their full potential. When it is time for the relationship to end, Nancy Collins (1983, p. 34) warns, "Women must guard against any impulse not to pass men."

Pitfall # 5 is analyzed initially as a structural problem because dependency of subordinates is a significant part of the foundation of institutional racism and sexism. Practices in modern-day institutions reflect the persistence of attitudinal remnants of early common law wherein women and children were legally controlled by a paternal power and where the legal status of slaves was equated with that of women and children. The latter points are made in Gunnar Myrdal's classic work on racial discrimination, An American Dilemma (1944). "Fallout" from this long-term structural problem includes "club members'" stereotypic views that minorities and women are intellectually inferior and not well prepared for independent leadership and scholarship. Thus, they are admitted on a token basis, winnowed out by the "objective" rules and regulations, and then blamed for not measuring up to the institution's standards. From the pre-

ceding discussion, it is clear that power and mission/culture problems underlie the structural issues.

Transforming strategies for addressing problems associated with pitfall # 5 overlap considerably with those discussed for pitfalls # 1, 2, 3, and 4. In brief, the key strategy is to develop alternative approaches to mentoring for minorities and women so that they are not solely dependent on white male senior educators. While the alternative approaches discussed earlier may not tap directly into the "inner circle" of powerholders, they can have a positive influence and be a beneficial source of information and support. An additional reminder to help the mentee move through the separation phase with a mentor and on to a position of peer and colleague is to remember the cyclical nature of mentoring relationships (N. Collins, 1983). Developing mentoring relationships needs to be perceived as a process that is on-going, with present needs being met and not perceived as a product that is cast in stone once a relationship is established.

Five Principles for Policymakers to Consider

The multifaceted approach that I propose for universities to consider for implementation is guided by the following five principles: 1. Initiators of mentoring programs for minorities and women attend to all four points of Terry's (1974, 1986) analytic model before implementing a formal program, 2. A successful mentoring program for minorities and women is sensitive to their unique needs and adapted to their different backgrounds and aspirations, 3. The program is formal with an

explicit policy that provides legitimation from the highest officials. It is augmented and supported by informal networks, alternative support systems, varied resources and rewards for mentors, 4. The program is conceptualized as an on-going, and evolving process, not as a narrow, bottom-line product to satisfy affirmative action and 5. The mentoring program is conceptualized as a vehicle for collective sharing, cooperation and community connectedness. The supporting institutional ethos is the development of human resources and quality of the educational climate.

Conclusion

Increasing the numbers of minority and women faculty in higher education is greatly needed to provide an accurate reflection of societal diversity and to provide appropriate role models for minority and female students. Changes proposed in this paper for transforming mentoring not only would benefit minorities and women, but they also would benefit education in general by providing a model of active inclusion to be used with other underrepresented groups.

By providing a mentoring program that is functional for minorities and women, universities and schools would be taking an active non-racist, non-sexist stance. As Robert Terry (1986) says, authentic pluralistic institutions practice active inclusion that is based on "a new consciousness of color and gender." I agree with Terry when he notes that a passive,

non-racist, non-sexist stance by a person or an institution is an illusion.

Minorities and women must be on the inside of the university if change is to occur. Universities, like other institutions, are self-perpetuating and not notably responsive to outside pressure for change. More than admitting minority and women faculty must be done in order for universities to be active in the cause for equity. Programs to retain people of color and women as active, inside participants in the system must be developed and implemented. I believe that appropriate mentoring is a viable means to that end.

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